

Kannan 1997; Bhupathy and Nixon 2004, Fig. 1). Even though, the present locality lies within the general Travancore Hills, it is perhaps, the only precise locality record available for this species south of Anamalai and Palni Hills, and is about 50 km (in straight line) from the nearest known site (i.e. Mathikettan shola). This record also indicates the possibility of the occurrence of *S. anamallayana* in Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala and on other hill tops such as Agasthiayamalai located further south. Further intensive surveys may yield new locality records and insights on the distribution pattern of this rare and endemic agamid species.

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## 10. RECORDS OF *ERYX JOHNNI* (RUSSELL, 1801) (OPHIDIA: BOIDAE) AND *ECHIS CARINATUS* (SCHNEIDER, 1801) (OPHIDIA: VIPERIDAE) FROM THE THAR DESERT, RAJASTHAN, INDIA, WITH DISTRIBUTIONAL NOTES ON OTHER SNAKES

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During the course of a routine survey of the Thar Desert of Rajasthan, as a part of the assessment of impacts of the Indira Gandhi Nahar Project on biodiversity, two snakes, *Eryx johnii* and *Echis carinatus*, were encountered. Indian Sand Boa *Eryx johnii* was observed at 2245 hrs on August 15, 2000, in an agricultural field near the Desert National Park (DNP) guest house at Sudansari, Jaisalmer. The venomous Saw-scaled Viper *Echis carinatus* was observed at 2150 hrs on August 17, 2000, in a hard rocky area with sparse vegetation, c. 8 km towards Barmer on the road from Jaisalmer. The subspecies status of this reptile was not determined, i.e., whether the snake was *Echis carinatus carinatus* or *Echis carinatus sochureki* (some taxonomists consider the two to be distinct species – *Echis carinatus* and *Echis sochureki*).

A marked difference in behaviour was observed between the two species. The Indian Sand Boa on being disturbed was not aggressive, instead it tried to escape. The Saw-scaled Viper on the other hand, adopted a defensive posture.

Both the snake species have been reported to occur throughout the dry arid regions of India. The Thar Desert covers 13 districts of western Rajasthan. So far, a total of 20 snake species have been reported from the Thar Desert

(Sharma 1996; Bhide *et al.* 2004). However, a look at their district-wise distribution reveals that they are not uniformly distributed. Maximum concentration occurs in Jodhpur district (15 species), while not a single species has been reported from Barmer, Churu, Ganganagar, Hanumangarh, Jalore and Jhunjhunu districts. In our opinion, as all the 13 districts of western Rajasthan lie within the Thar Desert and have similar environmental conditions, 60-70% of the snake species recorded in the Thar Desert may be present in all the districts. The present status of report may be due to the biased nature of earlier surveys. Thus, there exists plenty of scope in the distributional study of snakes within all 13 districts of the Thar Desert.

Previously, the Indian Sand Boa has been reported from two districts and the Saw-scaled Viper from five districts of western Rajasthan (Table 1). The present report adds to the existing knowledge of distribution of snake fauna in Jaisalmer district of the Thar Desert, Rajasthan, India.

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**Table 1:** Status of Snake fauna in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan

SN	Common name	Scientific name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Brahminy Blind Snake	<i>Ramphotyphlops braminus</i>		+							+				
2.	Rough-tailed Sand Boa	<i>Gonylophis conicus</i>									+		+		
3.	Indian Sand Boa	<i>Eryx johnii</i>		+				*			+				
4.	Trinket Snake	<i>Coelognathus helena</i>													+
5.	Oriental Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosa</i>									+		+		
6.	Hardwicke's Rat Snake	<i>Platyceps ventromaculatus</i>		+				+			+				
7.	Diadem Snake	<i>Spalerosophis diadema</i>									+	+			
8.	Royal Snake	<i>Spalerosophis atriceps</i>										+			
9.	Red-spotted Royal Snake	<i>Spalerosophis arenarius</i>		+							+				
10.	Sind Longnose Sand Snake	<i>Lytorhynchus paradoxus</i>													+
11.	Indian Wolf Snake	<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>									+				
12.	Asiatic Water Snake	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>									+		+		+
13.	Lead Keelback	<i>Macropisthodon plumbicolor</i>													+
14.	Indian Gamma Snake	<i>Boiga trigonata</i>									+				
15.	Schokari Sand Racer	<i>Psammophis schokari</i>		+							+				
16.	Green Whip Snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>													+
17.	Indian Krait	<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>		+				+			+				
18.	Indian Cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>						+			+				
19.	Russell's Viper	<i>Daboia russelii</i>									+				
20.	Saw-scaled Viper	<i>Echis carinatus</i>		+					*		+	+	+		+

1 - Barmer; 2 - Bikaner; 3 - Churu; 4 - Ganganagar; 5 - Hanumangarh; 6 - Jaisalmer; 7 - Jalore; 8 - Jhunjhunu; 9 - Jodhpur; 10 - Nagaur; 11 - Pali; 12 - Sikar; 13 - Sirohi; '+' - Earlier record; '\*' - Present record

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### 11. HARDWICK'S SPINY-TAILED LIZARD (*UROMASTYX HARDWICKII*, GRAY 1827) PREYED ON BY INDIAN SAND BOA (*ERYX JOHNII*, RUSSELL 1801)

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The Narayan Sarowar Sanctuary (NSS) is located (23° 27'-23° 42' N; 68° 30'-68° 57' E) in the westernmost part of the Kachchh district of the Gujarat State, India. NSS is a unique arid thorn forest ecosystem of the country which supports 15 threatened species of wildlife belonging to Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Singh 2001). In which, a lizard *Uromastyx hardwickii* is found locally common (Vyas 2002) and is also categorized as Vulnerable (Molur and Walker 1998).

A recent observation of *Eryx johnii* preying on *U. hardwickii* was observed at NSS on September 10, 2008, at 0940 hrs in the reserve forest (Grassland) of Bhojpur village



Fig. 1: *Eryx johnii* holding *Uromastyx hardwickii* in its mouth